

FIND AN EVENT

type in artist, band, venue or city...

AVERAGE TICKET PRICES **oper** \$39.58 **Tegan and Sara** \$30.35 **"Rockstar Energy M**

A Few Minutes With Mishka

Posted on Monday April 5, 2010 at 06:01 PM

1 |

The first thing you're apt to notice when talking with Mishka is just how down-to-earth the reggae artist is.

Sure, he's more than willing to talk about his music, but you soon realize he's rather modest about his accomplishments, including his four-album discography, growing up on his parents' sailboat and representing Bermuda in world championship windsurfing competitions.

Nor does he bring up the fact he was the first artist to sign with actor Matthew McConaughey indie label – j.k. livin.

Born Mishka Frith, the artist wasn't the only musician raised on that sailboat. His older sibling is singer/songwriter Heather Nova, who Mishka often refers to as his "big sister." His uncle was a musician, and his dad has been known to play a little harmonica. As Mishka told *Pollstar*, "You got to really love music a lot in my family."

Mishka's fourth album – *Talk About* – was released digitally in mid March, and debuted at No. 1 on iTunes reggae chart. The artist also held a CD release party at West Hollywood's Roxy where he announced a deal with O'Neill Clothing / La Golla Group in which he lends his face to the ECO'Neill Men's Collection.

We recently spoke with Mishka about the new album as well as his approach to music and which artists influenced his own musical journey.



Mishka
Performing at the CD release party for *Talk About*.
March 23, 2010
(Julia Charity)
Add |

How long did it take to record the new album?

The actual recording took about nine days. We wanted to do everything pretty much live. It's got more of a live feeling. It's a little more real, a little more live.

What about the writing process? How long does it take to write the material?

A couple of songs were older, going back five or six years. The rest were written within the last year two. And some of them I wrote a couple of months before recording the album. Some I was writing right up to the day I was recording, and even while I was recording.

Which is more difficult – writing the songs or recording them?

I think writing and getting it to a place where you say, "Yeah, that's it." Arranging and getting it all together. Once you got that, it's really just playing it a few times and getting a good take.

Let's talk about the first single from the new album – "Bittersweet." When you began composing the song, did you start off with a very rough version, perhaps picking out the melody on your guitar? Or do you know how it's going to sound even before you wrote anything down?

I did the melody and the basic chord structure of the song. My wife actually wrote the lyrics to "Bittersweet" and asked me to put it to music. It kind of came off the top of my head, melody wise. I played with the chords back and forth until it started to feel like a song.

There's a line on your Web site that states, "His lyrics speak to his engaging perspective on life, distrust of authority, distaste of corruption and faith in love and our world's people." About your distrust of authority – is that a general distrust or does that come from your own personal experience?

Partly from experience. It's a political perspective. Looking at what sources claim to be authorities on things, and who they are.

Are you promoting any particular ideology or issue?

No. I'm very non-political in terms of my philosophy on life. Life is a lot bigger than politics. That's why when it says that in the quote – I just see so-called authorities to not really be the authorities. Life is so much bigger than all that.

Didn't you become interested in music at a very early age?

Yeah, really young. As far back as I can remember. My mother listened to a lot of tapes and LPs back in the day. My uncle was a musician, my big sister [Heather Nova] is a musician. My father plays a little harmonica. He'd never admit to being a musician but he's musical. You got to really love music a lot in my family. My sister taught me guitar and has been a big inspiration to me.

Are you a fan as well as a performer when you play music festivals? Do you check out other artists' performances or meet bands you admire?

Yeah. The first year we played [Austin City Limits](#) there were a whole lot of artists I wanted to hear, but I couldn't hear them all because some were playing at the same time.

Other times you go and you don't really know anybody else on the bill, but you go check some of them out. You become a fan of someone's music you haven't heard before. I love that element of that. You get to find out about new stuff and nothing is better than hearing it live. That's really cool.

Who are your heroes?

My children, my parents, my wife. Musical heroes? John Lennon, Bob Marley, [Bob Dylan](#), [K'Naan](#). I've had a lot of musical heroes – people who are saying something that's important or relevant to what's going on in the world.

Your Web site states you bought your first album – [Roxy Music's "Avalon"](#) – when you were 10 years old. Do you still have it?

I don't have a copy of it right now. I might have downloaded a couple of tracks from iTunes. A lot of music I grew up with is still in my head and in my heart even if I don't actually have the physical tapes anymore.



At The Roxy
"I've had a lot of musical heroes – people who are saying something that's important or relevant to what's going on in the world."
March 23, 2010
(Julia Charity)
Add |

People have posted videos on YouTube of themselves playing your songs. What's your take on that?

I love it. I think it's really nice. A couple of them are from younger musicians in their teens learning to play my songs. It's really inspiring to see that. That music can be a continuation. It's not just something you do once. You just don't write a song and it's done. Someone is going to take it and put their twist on it. I like it.

What do you have planned for your next tour?

At least half of the material will be based on the new album and the rest will probably go back to the other three albums. Right now the band is basically myself and four other musicians. We try to represent the music as close as can be, how it's played on the album.

Sometimes it's difficult because of overdubs and stuff – backing vocals or whatever. It's going to come across pretty much like the album.

Do you find making albums easier or harder as your career progresses?

Definitely easier as far as musicianship, knowing what I want, knowing what I want to hear from the musicians and being able to relay to them what I want to hear. My understanding of music is getting deeper.

Was there a specific moment in your career that you feel marks the transition from amateur musician to professional?

I wouldn't say I'm there yet. As soon as you think you're pro, you probably don't know what you're doing. I do what I can do. It's always been like that. I play to the best of my abilities.

I could say I'm a pro and I play in front of a lot of people, but I know what my limitations are. Also how much there is to learn.



Mishka At The Roxy
"I'm very non-political in terms of my philosophy on life. Life is a lot bigger than politics."
March 23, 2010
(Julia Charity)
Add |

For more information about Mishka, please click [here](#) for the artist's Web site.

–Jay Smith